

A photograph of a graduation ceremony. Numerous blue graduation caps are seen flying through the air against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, the backs of graduates in blue gowns are visible, with their arms raised in celebration. The scene is set outdoors with green trees in the background.

# Made in Maine

A State Report Card on Public Higher Education

American Council of Trustees and Alumni  
with The Maine Heritage Policy Center



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April 2011

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The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is an independent non-profit dedicated to academic excellence, academic freedom, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Since its founding in 1995, ACTA has counseled boards, educated the public, and published reports about such issues as good governance, historical literacy, core curricula, the free exchange of ideas, and accreditation. ACTA has previously published *Here We Have Idaho: A State Report Card on Public Higher Education*, *At a Crossroads: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Minnesota*, *For the People: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Illinois*, *Show Me: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Missouri*, *Shining the Light: A Report Card on Georgia's System of Public Higher Education*, and *Governance in the Public Interest: A Case Study of the University of North Carolina System*, among other state-focused reports.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center is a non-profit research and educational organization that formulates innovative public policy solutions for Maine concerning the economy and taxation, education, health care, and open government based on the principles of free enterprise and limited government. The Center recommends findings to policymakers, media, and the people of Maine.

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## Introduction

**"AS MAINE GOES, SO GOES THE NATION."** Such is indeed the case with higher education, as Maine faces challenges seen throughout the country. The education that Maine's seven-campus university system provides is crucial for the well-being and progress of the state. Higher education has many vital functions, including pure and applied research, agricultural extension centers, and continuing education for adult learners, but its primary claim to public support rests on the undergraduate programs it provides for students seeking degrees and diplomas. In this regard, it is crucial that policymakers, university personnel, trustees, alumni, and taxpayers—both in Maine and every other state—learn from Maine's successes and failures. With this in mind, ACTA adds this report card to the list of those it has prepared for North Carolina, Georgia, Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, Idaho, and the Big 12 Conference.

Maine is blessed with universities that have records of significant achievement. The flagship campus at Orono was established in 1865, the year the American Civil War ended, and it numbers among its distinguished alumni six state governors; Bernard Lown, co-founder of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War which won the Nobel Peace Prize; and the chief engineer of the Hoover Dam. The Farmington campus was the alma mater of the Stanley brothers, who produced the 19th century Stanley Steamer automobile, as well as John Frank Stevens, engineer of the Panama Canal. The seven campuses of the University of Maine System (UMS) together educated over 23,000 students (full-time equivalent) during the past year.

But for good reason, in recent years public confidence in higher education throughout the nation has fallen. Half of the respondents in a Public Agenda survey last year said that they believe colleges could spend less and still maintain academic quality; 49 percent agreed that their state's public college and university system needed to be fundamentally overhauled. Such erosion of public confidence is not surprising in light of major studies of student learning. In *Academically Adrift*, sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa showed that 45 percent of college students demonstrate no learning gains in critical thinking, reasoning, and writing skills in the first two years of college, and a staggering 36 percent fail to achieve significant intellectual growth after four (expensive) years of college. The federal government's *National Assessment of Adult Literacy* revealed that 26 percent of four-year college graduates would

have difficulty computing the total cost of ordering office supplies from a catalog. In Maine, Governor Paul LePage has called for transparency and accountability and new, cost effective delivery strategies for higher education through the Learn to Earn initiative. It is in this context that ACTA offers *Made in Maine: A State Report Card on Public Higher Education*.

The first section focuses on **general education**—those courses usually completed within the first two years of a bachelor’s degree program to ensure a common intellectual background, as well as college-level skills critical to workforce participation. Here we found that while all of the University of Maine System campuses require their students to take courses in composition and natural science, the curricular weaknesses are also very clear: only two UMS campuses (Orono and Fort Kent) require students to take a course in college-level mathematics; only one (Augusta) requires a broad literature survey; and no campus requires foreign language study beyond the beginning level, or any courses at all in U.S. history or government or in economics. The University of Maine System requirements should be tightened so that they clearly point students to essential knowledge.

In the second section, we focus on **intellectual diversity**, a value that lies at the very heart of the educational enterprise. In the simplest terms, intellectual diversity means the free exchange of ideas. According to a scientific survey of students we commissioned, the UMS needs serious improvement in this area. Students unambiguously report violations of professional standards—including perceived pressure to agree with professors’ views in order to get a good grade—and exhibit an unsettling lack of awareness of their rights and how to ensure those rights are respected. There are available remedies, and many institutions across the country have taken responsible action in recent years to guarantee intellectual pluralism. The University of Maine System should join them.

The third section turns to **governance** and actions by the UMS Board of Trustees. These board members are responsible for the academic and financial well-being of the institutions they oversee and for safeguarding the public interest. Our examination of board minutes and other publicly available materials suggests that the board functions, generally speaking, in a transparent manner. As a whole, however, the board needs to be more proactive; as fiduciaries, they should be more fully involved in presidential searches, academic program prioritization, academic quality review, and initiatives for affordability and student success.

In the final section, we look at **cost and effectiveness**. This is an area of real concern. On average, from 2004 to 2009, in-state tuition and fees at UMS institutions increased by an average of 35 percent. The Farmington campus raised tuition almost 50 percent in just five years. Meanwhile, on no campus did we find even two-thirds of the students receiving a degree within six years—suggesting that not only is tuition going up, but many students are paying well beyond the expected four years, and even beyond six years. System-wide, only about one in five students admitted to a four-year program at a UMS institution will graduate on time. Even if given six years, the system only manages to graduate about 40 percent of its students. The Orono and Farmington campuses have slightly higher graduation rates, as would be expected from, respectively, a state flagship and a liberal-arts college, but 58 percent and 62 percent (respectively) are still unacceptably low graduation rates.

The economic recession that has caused hardship for the nation has occasioned a rethinking of higher education cost and effectiveness. ACTA's hope is that this report card will help the citizens and policymakers of Maine strengthen the University of Maine System and model practices that will also help other states in their higher education reform efforts. We hope that in regard to higher education, the saying, "As Maine goes, so goes the nation," will be a source of pride for the citizens of this state and for all those associated with its public universities.

Anne D. Neal  
 President  
 American Council of Trustees and Alumni



## CHAPTER I:

System Grade	<b>GENERAL EDUCATION</b>
<b>F</b>	Maine's public universities have solid requirements in composition and natural science. However, large numbers of students can graduate without a strong base of knowledge in mathematics, literature, foreign language, U.S. government or history, and economics.

**"GENERAL EDUCATION" OR THE "CORE CURRICULUM"** refers to required undergraduate courses outside the student's specialization or major. Traditionally, these courses have been subject to two limits. First, they are relatively few in number, and, second, they are general in scope. These courses—usually completed within the first two years of a bachelor's degree program and typically comprising between one-quarter and one-third of the total number of undergraduate credit hours—are supposed to ensure a common intellectual background, exposure to a wide range of disciplines, a core of fundamental knowledge, and college-level skills in areas critical to good citizenship, workforce participation, and lifelong learning.

To assess the state of general education in Maine, we looked at all seven of the University of Maine System's campuses: The flagship campus at Orono, the University of Southern Maine in Portland, and sister institutions at Augusta, Fort Kent, Farmington, Machias, and Presque Isle. Using the most recent online course catalogs for the universities, we examined whether these institutions require their students to take general education courses in seven key subjects: Composition, Literature, Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural or Physical Science. Of course, arguments can be made for requiring any number of additional topics, but a core curriculum that fails to require most of these seven key subjects will not satisfy the basic demands of general education.

Simply having requirements called Literature or Mathematics does not in fact mean that students will study those subjects in a manner appropriate for general education purposes. Many colleges give the appearance of providing a core curriculum because they require students to take courses in several subject areas other than their major—often called "distribution requirements." However, within each subject area, it is not uncommon for students to have

dozens or even hundreds of courses from which to choose—many of them on narrow or trendy subject matter. Therefore, to be counted in this report, a course must be a true general education course—broad in scope, exposing the student to the rich array of material that exemplifies the subject. Furthermore, if a course that qualifies for credit were one of several options that also included courses that do not meet the specifications for general education credit, the institution did not receive credit for the subject. For further details on the criteria used, please see Appendix A.

After researching the seven UMS universities, we assigned a Passing (P) or Failing (F) grade for each subject. Ideally, every Maine graduate should be exposed to all of the broad areas outlined above; however, if a majority of the institutions surveyed (four or more) required the subject, a grade of P was awarded to the state. If three or fewer of the institutions surveyed required the subject, a grade of F was assigned. On the whole, the University of Maine System earned an F, with none of the seven institutions requiring courses in more than three of the seven subjects.

GENERAL EDUCATION	
Composition	P
Literature	F
Language	F
U.S. Government or History	F
Economics	F
Mathematics	F
Natural or Physical Science	P
SYSTEM GRADE:	F

The UMS institutions have two clear strengths: every single campus within the system requires at least one course in English Composition and one in Natural or Physical Science.

Unfortunately, the weaknesses are also very clear: only two UMS campuses (Orono and Fort Kent) require students to take a course in college-level mathematics; only one (Augusta) requires a broad literature survey; and none require foreign language study beyond the beginning level or any courses at all in U.S. government or history or in economics.

These failings are particularly disappointing given that UMS institutions express such strong support for the goals of general education. The flagship campus claims that it aims to “ensure that all of its graduates, regardless of the academic major they pursue, are broadly educated persons who can appreciate the achievements of civilization, understand the tensions within it, and contribute to resolving them.” Yet the university largely leaves students to choose their own core curriculum. The largest portion of the University of Maine at Orono’s General Education program is the “Human Values and Social Context” category. It covers dozens of subjects, and students choose six courses from a list of over 100 options.

Other schools offer similar support of a core curriculum in their published materials. The University of Maine at Farmington maintains that “the role of General Education ... is to liberate and empower the student.” The Machias campus claims that its Core Curriculum will ensure that “students graduate from UMM ready to live full and interesting lives.” And the University of Maine at Fort Kent explains in great detail the philosophy and goals of its general education program, concluding that, “The general education curriculum embodies the institution’s definition of an educated person.” However, UMFK does not require literature, U.S. government or history, economics, or foreign language beyond the elementary level. It requires only a single course in “Arts and Humanities”—a requirement that may be satisfied by a class on “The History of Rock and Roll.” Such a gap between promise and performance is all too common at Maine’s universities and does a disservice to students.

In order to be good stewards of their resources and to ensure that students acquire the knowledge they need, the UMS institutions should proceed on two fronts. First, they should retain the excellent requirements they already have in composition and natural science. Second, they should strengthen their other requirements so that students will learn college-level math, achieve intermediate competency in a foreign language, understand basic economic principles, and take courses with broad scope in literature and U.S. government or history. The UMS trustees, given their ultimate responsibility to the people of Maine, can and should play a central role in this process.

The following chart summarizes our research.

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS BY INSTITUTION

INSTITUTION	Comp	Lit	Lang	Gov/ Hist	Econ	Math	Sci
University of Maine-Augusta	√	√					√
University of Maine-Farmington	√						√
University of Maine-Fort Kent	√					√	√
University of Maine-Machias	√						√
University of Maine-Orono	√					√	√
University of Maine-Presque Isle	√						√
University of Southern Maine	√						√
GRADES	P	F	F	F	F	F	P

Notes:

*Augusta:* No credit given for Mathematics because the "Quantitative Skills" requirement may be satisfied by courses with little college-level math content. Additionally, the "Mathematics, Natural and Computer Sciences" general education requirement may be satisfied by science courses.

*Farmington:* No credit given for Mathematics because the "Math" requirement may be satisfied by courses with little college-level math content. No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study.

*Fort Kent:* No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study.

*Machias:* No credit given for Literature because the "Interpreting Literature and the Arts" requirement may be fulfilled with courses that are not literature surveys. No credit given for Mathematics because the "Science and Mathematics" requirement may be satisfied by courses with little college-level math content.

*Presque Isle:* No credit given for U.S. Government or History because a survey course in American government or history is optional, but not required, to fulfill the historical analysis category of the "Social Sciences" requirement. No credit given for Mathematics because the "Quantitative Decision Making" requirement may be satisfied by courses with little college-level math content.

*Southern Maine:* No credit given for Literature because the literature portion of the "Humanities" requirement may be fulfilled with literature courses narrow in scope. No credit given for Mathematics because the "Quantitative Decision Making" requirement may be satisfied by courses with little college-level math content.

## CHAPTER II:

System Grade	<b>INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY</b>
<b>F</b>	Survey results and several campus speech codes suggest that institutions within the University of Maine System are not delivering on well-advertised commitments to academic freedom and free expression.

**“IN ANY EDUCATION OF QUALITY**, students encounter an abundance of intellectual diversity.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the position of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)—a respected national organization whose members include the University of Maine System—which issued this statement in 2006.

In order to experience intellectual diversity, the AAC&U explained, students should be exposed to “new knowledge, different perspectives, competing ideas, and alternative claims of truth.” They should learn to think critically—so that they understand “the inappropriateness and dangers of indoctrination... see through the distortions of propaganda, and...[can] assess judiciously the persuasiveness of powerful emotional appeals.”<sup>2</sup>

To make this possible, the AAC&U maintains that students “require a safe environment in order to feel free to express their own views.” They “need the freedom to express their ideas publicly as well as repeated opportunities to explore a wide range of insights and perspectives.” And as part of this process, the AAC&U noted, faculty play a critical role in helping students to “form their own grounded judgments.”<sup>3</sup>

These sentiments are not new. In 1940, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) wrote in its Statement of Principles that faculty “should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject,”<sup>4</sup> and its 1915 Declaration of Principles is even more to the point:

1 Association of American Colleges and Universities, “Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility,” a statement from the Board of Directors (2006), 2.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 American Association of University Professors, “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments” <[http://www.higher-ed.org/resources/AAUP\\_1940stat.htm](http://www.higher-ed.org/resources/AAUP_1940stat.htm)>.

The teacher ought also to be especially on his guard against taking unfair advantage of the student's immaturity by indoctrinating him with the teacher's own opinions before the student has had an opportunity fairly to examine other opinions upon the matters of question, and before he has sufficient knowledge and ripeness in judgment to be entitled to form any definitive opinion of his own. It is not the least service which a college or university may render to those under its instruction, to habituate them to looking not only patiently but methodically on both sides, before adopting any conclusion upon controverted issues.<sup>5</sup>

Maine's institutions have published statements regarding students' rights to free expression. For example, the UMS Policy Manual states in section 212 that, "there shall be no restrictions, on any of the System institutions, placed on the fundamental rights of free speech and assembly, except those necessary to preserve the order for the University System to function as an institution of higher learning."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Orono campus Student Handbook declares that "there shall be no restrictions placed on the fundamental rights to free speech and assembly..."<sup>7</sup>

Yet despite these articulate defenses of free speech, standing policies at some Maine campuses have aroused concern from defenders of civil liberties. The University of Southern Maine has a broad policy on "non-discriminatory harassment" that can sanction individuals even for unintentional words or actions,<sup>8</sup> and the University of Maine at Presque Isle says that "harassment" can be found even in a single unintentional "off-hand comment or joke," and posits broadly that all students have a "right not to be harassed."<sup>9</sup> The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which maintains a comprehensive database of such policies, has concluded that restrictive policies

5 General Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure (1915), 1 AAUP Bull 17 (1915), cited in *Freedom and Tenure in the Academy*, William W. Van Alstyne, Editor (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 402.

6 University of Maine System Policy Manual, "Governance and Legal Affairs, Section 212 Free Speech and Assembly," accessed 2 March 2011 <[http://www.maine.edu/system/policy\\_manual/policy\\_section212.php](http://www.maine.edu/system/policy_manual/policy_section212.php)>.

7 UMAINE Student Handbook, "Free Speech and Assembly Policy," accessed 2 March 2011 <[http://www.umaine.edu/handbook/PolREg/free\\_speech\\_and\\_assembly\\_policy.htm](http://www.umaine.edu/handbook/PolREg/free_speech_and_assembly_policy.htm)>.

8 University of Southern Maine Office of Equity and Compliance <<http://www.usm.maine.edu/eo/policies/1223.1.htm>>.

9 University of Maine at Presque Isle, "Residence Hall Guide," <<http://www.umpi.edu/files/current-students/reslife/pdf/res-hall-guide.pdf>>, 15.

are in place at three of Maine's public institutions: Orono, Southern Maine, and Presque Isle.<sup>10</sup> The University of Maine at Orono and University of Southern Maine have earned "yellow light" warnings from FIRE for endangering free speech, and the University of Maine at Presque Isle is on the "red light" list for clear and substantial restrictions of free speech.

To gain further insight, ACTA commissioned the Pert Group, a national firm with offices in Hartford, Kansas City, and Pittsburgh, to perform a survey of students at the University of Maine. The survey was administered in January 2011 at the flagship campus in Orono.

Mostly, we asked the students questions that correspond to four key indicators of intellectual diversity as outlined by the AAC&U: offering different perspectives, competing ideas, and alternative claims of truth; teaching students to think critically; providing a safe learning environment for students; and ensuring professional responsibility in the classroom. In order to assign grades, we used a standard cut-off of 64 percent as a Passing grade (P). If fewer than 36 percent of students reported problems for each indicator, then Maine received a P. If more than 36 percent reported problems, Maine received a Failing grade (F) for that indicator.

ACTA has used similar questions and grading standards for previous report cards on other states. The results for Maine are summarized in the following table; a methodology report is available in Appendix B. The full results are available online at <http://www.goacta.org/publications/PDFs/MaineSurveyFull.pdf>.

Overall, the results are troubling. A significant number of students reported that some faculty are unfairly politicizing classrooms, with nearly half (49 percent) agreeing that, "On my campus, some courses present social or political issues in an unfair and one-sided manner," and 40 percent agreeing that, "some professors frequently comment on politics in class even though it has nothing to do with the course." Substantial percentages of students reported course readings and panel discussions that are one-sided or unfair and pressure to agree with a professor's views in order to get a good grade. Few students reported being aware of procedures in place to lodge a complaint about such concerns, and a substantial number reported that they would feel uncomfortable doing so even if they had a good reason. And while the results

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10 The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, "Institutions in Maine," accessed 2 March 2011 <<http://thefire.org/spotlight/states/ME.html>>.

suggest that students think they have more free speech rights outside the classroom than in it, over a third of the students believed that the student newspaper would get in trouble if it criticized the administration.

Well over one-third of the students at the University of Maine at Orono agreed with the statement that, “on my campus, there are certain topics or viewpoints that are off limits.” While fewer students noted concern when it came to a safe learning environment, the fact that so many students fear to express themselves on sensitive topics strongly suggests the need for careful monitoring of the campus climate. The harassment policies at Southern Maine and Presque Isle noted above are also a threat to free speech. The intellectual health of a university is dependent on the free exchange of ideas and the freedom to explore any topic, and schools must foster an atmosphere of free inquiry. When students believe that certain viewpoints are taboo, something is amiss.

Institutions in Georgia and Missouri, faced with survey findings similar to those above, made key changes.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Maine’s administrators and trustees should work together to ensure that all students experience an intellectual climate open to a robust exchange of ideas.

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11 The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, *Protecting the Free Exchange of Ideas: How Trustees Can Advance Intellectual Diversity on Campus*, 2009 <<https://www.goacta.org/publications/downloads/ProtectingFreeExchangeofIdeas.pdf>>, 11-15 ; Phyllis Palmiero, *Shining the Light: A Report Card on Georgia’s System of Public Higher Education*, 2008 <<https://www.goacta.org/publications/downloads/GAFinalReport.pdf>>, 7-10; The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, *Show Me: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Missouri*, 2008 <<https://www.goacta.org/publications/downloads/ShowMeFinal.pdf>>.



## KEY INDICATORS OF INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY

**OFFERING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, COMPETING IDEAS, AND ALTERNATIVE CLAIMS OF TRUTH****GRADE: F****QUESTION**

“On my campus, some courses have readings that present only one side of a controversial issue.”

**RESULT**

60.9 percent agreed

**QUESTION**

“On my campus, some panel discussions and public presentations on social or political issues seem totally one-sided.”

**RESULT**

48.4 percent agreed

**QUESTION**

“On my campus, some courses present social or political issues in an unfair and one-sided manner.”

**RESULT**

48.7 percent agreed

**TEACHING STUDENTS TO THINK CRITICALLY****GRADE: F****QUESTION**

“On my campus, some professors use the classroom to present their personal political views.”

**RESULT**

47.2 percent agreed

**QUESTION**

“On my campus, there are courses in which students feel they have to agree with the professor’s social or political views in order to get a good grade.”

**RESULT**

36.7 percent agreed

**QUESTION**

“On my campus, there are courses in which students feel they have to agree with the professor’s views on the topic at hand in order to get a good grade.”

**RESULT**

45.9 percent agreed

**QUESTION**

“On my campus, some professors frequently comment on politics in class even though it has nothing to do with the course.”

**RESULT**

40.3 percent agreed

**PROVIDING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS****GRADE: P****QUESTION**

“On my campus, there are certain topics or viewpoints that are off limits.”

**RESULT**

34.7 percent agreed

**QUESTION**

“Students feel free to state their social or political views through social media, such as Facebook or MySpace, without getting in trouble on my campus.”

**RESULT**

4.0 percent disagreed

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
“On my campus, students feel free to state their social or political views outside the classroom without getting in trouble.”	4.2 percent disagreed
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
“On my campus, some aspects of freshman orientation programs force students to reveal what they think about controversial social, political, or religious issues.”	22.3 percent agreed
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
“On my campus, some aspects of freshman orientation programs tell students what they should think about controversial social, political, or religious issues.”	20.2 percent agreed
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
“On my campus, the student newspaper is free to criticize the university administration without getting in trouble.”	36.3 percent disagreed

<b>ENSURING PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM</b>	<b>GRADE: F</b>
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
“Do you know the procedure on your campus for lodging a complaint about social, political, or religious bias by a professor?”	88.0 percent said no
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
“How comfortable would you feel lodging a complaint about social, political, or religious bias by a professor if you felt you had just cause?”	31.6 percent said somewhat or very uncomfortable
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>RESULT</b>
“Do the student evaluation forms of the faculty at your campus ask about a professor’s social, political, or religious bias?”	71.9 percent said no

**SYSTEM GRADE: F**

## CHAPTER III:

System Grade	<b>GOVERNANCE</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>Board Structure and Transparency of Operations</b> The board is generally well structured, operates transparently, and meets regularly—though there is room for improvement in attendance and committee initiative.
<b>F</b>	<b>Board Accomplishments</b> The board has had a limited role in strategic planning and oversight of academic affairs and needs to be more proactive in controlling spending and advancing academic excellence.

**THE PURPOSE OF LAY GOVERNANCE** in higher education is to bring the viewpoint of informed citizens to bear on the running of the system. Trustees must be caretakers of the public interest, ensuring that colleges and universities provide high-quality and affordable education. They need to support their institutions but also be prepared to question the status quo if necessary. Trustees need to work with the president and the administration but should also be able to exercise their authority independently. Even in a world of shared governance, it is ultimately the trustees who are vested with the responsibility for the health of their institutions.

However, it is often the case that lay boards do not live up to the promise of effective citizen governance. While some boards are actively involved in working with administrators and other constituencies and are willing to exercise the authority needed to make tough choices, others simply function as rubber stamps for administrative recommendations. The preeminence of our system of higher education can be ensured only if there is informed leadership from those who are vested with the financial and academic health of our colleges and universities—namely, college and university trustees.

This section of the report examines the effectiveness of the University of Maine System Board of Trustees.

**Part I** examines the effectiveness of the board's structure and the transparency of its operations, based on elements viewed as effective governance practices by such organizations as Independent Sector, ACTA's Institute for

Effective Governance, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Committee on Finance of the United States Senate. These metrics include: availability and accessibility of trustees' names and contact information; meeting frequency; member attendance; board size; the board's periodic review of its bylaws and/or policies; member engagement in professional development; transparency of the board's activities and actions; the board's committee structure including its use of an executive committee; the board's role in presidential searches and its assessment of the president; and the board's involvement in the development and monitoring of a long-range plan.

**Part II** examines each board's actual outcomes with particular emphasis on system-wide academic quality and fiscal accountability. Elements examined include actions the board has taken to improve academic quality, assess student learning, and control costs. This part also examines whether the items brought by the administration to the board were ever rejected and whether action items ever received dissenting votes. Both criteria are designed to assess whether board members are asking questions and engaging issues thoughtfully as opposed to simply "rubber-stamping" administrative and staff recommendations.

To summarize, Part I examines how well the board is structured to do its work, while Part II examines what the board has accomplished during a given period.

The analysis covers board actions from January 2009 through March 2011. Board agendas, minutes, bylaws, and other UMS or Board of Trustees documents, as well as media reports were consulted. Most materials were publicly available, but some were obtained from UMS staff upon request.

Grading is on a Pass/Fail basis. The board received a Passing grade (P) if its formal actions demonstrated good governance practices. If not, then the board received a Failing grade (F). If the information available did not clearly indicate either, the board received an Incomplete (I).

PART I: BOARD STRUCTURE AND TRANSPARENCY OF OPERATIONS

According to the charter of the University of Maine System, the board is “the governing and planning body” of the university. It will “[p]lan strategies for programs and allocation of resources that most effectively serve the educational needs of the citizens of this State” and “[d]evelop and maintain a strong system of accountability to the public for performance results of the system” among other duties. According to its bylaws, “the jurisdiction of the Board relates to, and is exercised over, inter alia, all educational, public service and research policies, financial policy, and the relation of the University System to the state and federal governments.”

The board is made up of 16 persons. Fourteen members are appointed for five-year terms by the governor and confirmed by the state legislature. The governor is required by the charter to make “every effort” to appoint at least one alumnus from each of the seven universities in the system. The 15th member is a student trustee, with full voting powers, appointed for a two-year term by the governor, subject to confirmation by the state legislature. The 16th member is the state’s Commissioner of Education, who serves as a voting member ex officio.

Governance Element	Evaluation
Names and contact information of board members publicly available and easily accessible	<p><b>To hold a board accountable, the public needs to know and have access to its members.<sup>12</sup></b></p> <p>The website for the board contains the names, photographs, addresses, biographies, and dates of appointment and expiration of terms. This is excellent practice.</p>
Grade: P	
Board meets frequently	<p><b>A board should meet as often as necessary to conduct its business.<sup>13</sup> While the necessary number of meetings to conduct business will vary, meeting regularly, at least quarterly, and calling other meetings as necessary, is a good general practice.</b></p> <p>The board bylaws state, “the Board shall establish a schedule of meetings for the ensuing year which shall provide for a minimum of four regular meetings, at least one to be scheduled in each calendar quarter.” Minutes posted on the board’s website indicate there were 16 meetings during the 27-month period reviewed: 14 regular meetings and two retreats. Committee meetings are generally held the same day as the regular board meeting, but various committees met separately an additional 18 times during the 27 months studied.</p>
Grade: P	

12 Martin Anderson, *Impostors in the Temple* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1996), 202.

13 *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice: A Guide for Charities and Foundations* (Washington, DC: Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007), 13.

**Governance  
Element**

**Evaluation**

Board members  
attend regularly

**Grade: P**

**A board that meets to conduct business cannot be effective if a majority of the board members are not present or members fail to attend regularly.**<sup>14</sup>

The board bylaws state that a simple majority of the trustees is considered a quorum. Attendance via telephone or other technology is permitted by the bylaws “where the Chair has determined on the record that the physical presence of the non-attending Trustee is prevented by a serious medical condition which makes it inadvisable or impossible to attend the meeting.” During the period reviewed, attendance at regular board meetings averaged 70 percent. Included in that average are two instances where a trustee attended via telephone, but where the reason for their physical absence is unexplained in the minutes. Twice during the period reviewed, only nine trustees—the bare minimum—were present at the bimonthly meeting. The state’s Commissioner of Education, while a full voting member of the board, did not attend any meetings during the period studied.

Active engagement by the full board is essential to addressing the challenges facing higher education. The board receives a Passing grade, but barely.

Effective board size

**Grade: P**

**While there is no magic number for the size of a governing board, an effectively functioning board should generally be no fewer than seven nor greater than 15.**<sup>15</sup>

As noted previously, the board has 16 members. This is a large number, but not so large as to prevent meaningful discussion and committee work. Having an even number of members is unusual because of the possibility of split votes. However, the board, which follows Robert’s Rules of Order, requires a majority vote in favor of a motion to pass. Thus, the board receives a Passing grade.

14 “Best Practices in University Governance,” expert testimony by ACTA’s Institute for Effective Governance at U.S. Senate Finance Committee Roundtable Discussion, March 3, 2006.

15 “Ensuring Quality Trusteeship in Higher Education,” expert testimony by ACTA at U.S. Senate Finance Committee Roundtable Discussion, March 3, 2006.

**Governance  
Element**
**Evaluation**

Periodic review  
of bylaws and/  
or policies

**Grade: P**

**Periodic review of bylaws and policies helps boards ensure that they are abiding by the rules they have set for themselves.**<sup>16</sup>

The board bylaws indicate that they may be amended at any regular meeting of the board by approval of a majority, provided that the proposed amendment is presented in writing either at the previous regular or special meeting of the board, or is sent with the agenda and materials for the meeting at which the proposed bylaws or policy amendments are to be voted upon. During the period studied, there were no changes to the bylaws, but several significant changes to the Policy Guide were made according to these procedures. Accordingly, the board receives a Passing grade.

Pre-service  
training and/or  
professional  
development

**Grade: P**

**Trustees should be oriented in their new role and receive expert advice from inside and outside the institution throughout their board service.**<sup>17</sup>

The board's policies and meeting minutes are silent on formal orientation as well as ongoing training or development. In response to inquiries, a staff member in the board office stated that new trustees' orientation is "tailored for each person's individual needs" and that new board members meet with system senior staff and the chancellor and may make campus visits to become familiar with each campus.

Meeting documents indicate that two retreats were held during the period reviewed. Although official minutes are not available on the board website, the 2010 retreat's agenda, as well as information from staff members in the board office, indicate that outside consultants provide training at the trustee retreats. Overall, the board merits a Passing grade.

<sup>16</sup> *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 17.

**Governance  
Element**

**Evaluation**

Transparency  
of board activities  
and actions

**Grade: P**

**The ability of the public to see how the board operates and what it is doing is a critical element to a board's success.<sup>18</sup>**  
**Transparency helps the board communicate with the university community at large and build trust and confidence in the university's overseers.**

The board gives advance notice online of all of its regular meetings; times and locations of all regular meetings through 2013 are posted on its website. The board's bylaws and policies are also posted on the website, as are meeting minutes from 1997 to the present and committee minutes from May 2008 to the present. Agendas, committee reports, and other supporting documents are generally available, although meeting minutes are not always posted immediately, and the chancellor's August 9, 2010 progress report to the board on the strategic plan is not available online.

Functioning  
committee  
structure

**Grade: F**

**For a board to conduct its work effectively and delve into issues in meaningful ways, it should have standing committees with specific roles and duties.<sup>19</sup>**

The board bylaws name nine standing committees: Executive, Academic Affairs, Audit, Finance/Facilities, Investment, Human Resources and Labor Relations, Student Affairs, Technology, and Trustee Affairs. Duties for each are not specifically outlined, and the bylaws indicate that the powers, duties, and responsibilities of each will be "assigned by the Board Chair and agreed upon by the Board." Committee assignments are made by the board chair, though the criteria by which committee assignments are determined is unspecified. Committee assignments are not posted on the board's website, but based on review of the minutes, committees seem to have 7-9 members each. In the interest of transparency, the board should make committee assignments publicly available, as well as the criteria that the board uses to determine such assignments and their respective duties. It should be noted that while committee assignments are unclear, it appears to be common practice for trustees to attend meetings for committees to which they are not formally assigned. Such proactive interest is praiseworthy.

18 *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 12.

19 "Best Practices in University Governance."



**Governance  
Element**
**Evaluation**

The board bylaws allow for ad hoc committees to be formed at the board's discretion, but the board does not appear to have made use of this provision during the period studied.

UMS bylaws commendably call for an annual board self-assessment, as well as an annual assessment of the board chair. Regrettably, neither of these important activities appears to be taking place, or, if they are, they are not given notice in the official record. The assessment of the board chair is assigned to the chair of the Human Resources and Labor Relations Committee, who is tasked with initiating an "annual evaluation of the Chair of the Board of Trustees," the findings of which are to be presented at the March board meeting each year. Neither the minutes from the March 2009 and 2010 board meetings, nor the agenda from the 2011 meeting indicate any such discussion took place.

Similarly, according to the bylaws, an annual self-assessment is to be initiated each year by the chair of the Trustee Affairs Committee. According to the minutes, the Trustee Affairs Committee last met January 6, 2009, via conference call; board assessment was not discussed. The self-assessment policy was mentioned in the minutes for the March 15, 2010 board meeting. According to the minutes, "Trustee Murphy reported that the Trustee Affairs Committee had discussed the need for a Board self-assessment, and said that this assessment will likely be scheduled on an annual basis." However, the trustee assessment process has not been mentioned in any board minutes since that meeting, nor does there appear to have been any effort to undertake this excellent practice.

Judging from the board meeting materials, most committee meetings consist primarily of hearing reports from various UMS staff and unanimously passing agenda items along for approval. The absence of active, working committees that investigate and report to the board on specific issues inhibits the independent examination of issues that is the mark of an effective governing board. Thus, a Failing grade.

Governance  
Element

Evaluation

Executive  
Committees

Grade: F

**Executive Committees are typically responsible for developing meeting agendas, planning board activities, reviewing compensation and reappointments, and monitoring committee work. In some cases, they also act on emergency or other items when the full board cannot convene. Given the important issues the Executive Committee frequently addresses, it is important that it not represent a quorum so that its actions are not binding on the full board.**<sup>20</sup>

The board has an Executive Committee which, according to the bylaws, consists of the chair and vice chair of the board and the chair of the other standing committees and “shall have and exercise between meetings of the board, any and all powers of the latter not specifically reserved to it, except that it may not take action against an expressed policy of the Board.”

In principle, the Executive Committee has a significant amount of authority. The bylaws do not, for example, require the full board to ratify Executive Committee decisions.

Yet despite the wide authority it has, according to minutes posted online, the Executive Committee has not met since August 27, 2008. Nor does the committee fulfill functions such as preparing the agenda for meetings of the full board. Instead the agenda for all board meetings, including all committee meetings, is prepared by the clerk of the board, a position currently held by the University System counsel—a member of the chancellor’s staff.

While boards rightly should insist on full board participation and refuse to hand off critical authority to the Executive or other committees, they should, at the same time, be proactive in setting their own agendas and prioritizing trustee discussions. Because the Executive Committee appears largely moribund, with substantial authority delegated to the administration, the board receives a Failing grade.

<sup>20</sup> “Best Practices in University Governance.”

**Governance****Element****Evaluation**

Involvement in presidential search committees

**Grade: I**

**Selecting a president is a board's most important decision. While boards should seek input from higher education's varied constituencies, they should always maintain control over the search process, ultimately choosing the candidates from which they will make their selection. Boards must remember that they hire, fire, and evaluate the chief executive and to delegate or abdicate their most important fiduciary duty is not good governance practice.**<sup>21</sup>

There was no chancellor search during the period studied, but the record indicates that the most recent search, in 2006-07, was well handled. The board did not hire a search firm and maintained control of the search process, with an eight-person search committee including six trustees.

However, the two recent searches for campus presidents reflect much less engagement. The Fort Kent campus went through the search process in 2009-10, and the Orono campus in 2010-11. The search process appears to have been quite similar in both instances; the Fort Kent search committee had 12 members, and Orono's 13. On each committee, only three members were members of the board of trustees. The board did not retain a search firm in either instance, but in both searches enlisted former UMS chancellor, Dr. Terrence MacTaggart, as a consultant.

Having trustees compose only a small minority of the search committee delegates too much authority to non-board members—especially when hiring the president of a flagship university that enrolls roughly a third of the system's students. The board's record here is mixed, and accordingly, a grade of Incomplete is given.

21 *Selecting a New President: What to do Before You Hire a Search Firm* (Washington, DC: ACTA's Institute for Effective Governance, 2004).

**Governance  
Element**

**Evaluation**

Renewal of presidential contracts based on regular evaluation

**Grade: P**

**Regular evaluations of the president prior to compensation adjustments and contract renewals or reappointments are important to ensure that board goals are being achieved.**<sup>22</sup>

The board’s policy on evaluation of the chancellor was changed in 2010. The board of trustees now conducts an “informal” annual review of the chancellor’s performance every May, with a “comprehensive review” every four years. The informal reviews are done by a three-person Review Group (the board chair, the vice chair, and chair of the Human Resources and Labor Relations Committee) and appear to be based primarily on the chancellor’s self-assessment. The quadrennial “comprehensive review” is to be conducted by an external reviewer and must include interviews or input from presidents, senior staff, and others, as well as a self-assessment statement prepared by the chancellor addressing the areas and issues raised by the Review Group and external reviewer. The Review Group is responsible for recommending to the board whether or not to extend the chancellor’s contract and any changes to the chancellor’s compensation.

Discussion of the chancellors’ performance is conducted in executive sessions, which are not open to the public; neither does it appear that the board provides a public summary of the reviews after the fact.

The board is to be commended for conducting thorough reviews of the chancellor prior to setting the new salary level, hence it earns a Passing grade; but a greater level of transparency about the general results and the criteria used in performance reviews would be consistent with national best practices.

<sup>22</sup> *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 15; *Assessing the President’s Performance: A “How To” Guide for Trustees* (Washington, DC: ACTA’s Institute for Effective Governance, 2006).

**Governance  
Element**
**Evaluation**

Development of a long-range plan

**Grade: I**

**Trustees, working with the university stakeholders, have a responsibility to clarify the mission, articulate the vision, and set broad strategic goals for the institution in achieving that vision. Once approved, the strategic plan should become the guiding plan that drives decision-making and evaluation processes.**<sup>23</sup>

The UMS strategic plan, entitled *New Challenges, New Directions*, is posted on the board's website. According to the board minutes, development of the plan began in the fall of 2008, and the plan was drafted over the next year and issued with an implementation plan in November 2009. According to the press release announcing the initiative, it was launched by the chancellor, the final version being only "slightly modified" from the original draft. There is no indication that the board played a major role in shaping *New Challenges, New Directions*, except to set its broad goals. Board chair Lyndel J. Wishcamper properly observed, "The economics of our system are essentially providing not only the opportunity but the necessity for us to analyze and address all our ways of operating."

The plan was largely developed by three major work groups, two of which were chaired by vice chancellors and composed of the chief financial and academic officers of the seven universities. The third group, "The Task Force on the Structure and Governance of the University of Maine System," had 12 members and two ex officio members. Despite the fact that its bylaws declare the Board of Trustees to be "the governing and planning body of the University of Maine System," only three members of this task force were trustees. The other participants included two vice chancellors, three faculty members, a university president, a staff member, a student, and four members of the community.

All told, the three groups developing the strategic plan consisted of 26 persons, three of whom were trustees and 21 of whom were UMS employees, with the vice chancellors serving on more than one committee. Appropriately, the board and university leadership held numerous public meetings.

23 *Strategic Planning and Trustee Responsibility* (Washington, DC: ACTA's Institute for Effective Governance, 2005).

**Governance  
Element**

**Evaluation**

The core goals of *New Challenges, New Directions* are listed as:

1. To serve the changing and evolving knowledge, research, public service, and educational needs of the people, businesses, and organizations of the State;
2. To keep the cost of baccalaureate and graduate education affordable for our students by moderating tuition increases; and
3. To implement efficiencies, organizational changes, and further economies of scale to bring spending in line with available resources.

In support of these broad goals, the report and its work plan include, laudably, a list of specific actions to be taken by specified dates; and, as the plan dictated, the chancellor's office has issued a progress report to the board. The board, however, needs to assume more leadership in applying the strategic plan to decision making and evaluation. Much remains to be done. Thus, an Incomplete for this governance element.

**SYSTEM GRADE: P**

## PART II: BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Governance

Element	Evaluation
<p>Actions to improve academic quality</p> <p><b>Grade: F</b></p>	<p>Board bylaws specify that one of the board's standing committees will be tasked with academic affairs. However, during the 27 months studied, the Academic Affairs Committee met independently only once; all other meetings were held jointly with the Student Affairs Committee. The committee's most common activities during the period studied involved approving new programs and mission statements and receiving enrollment reports. The minutes do not record any specific actions taken either by the Academic Affairs Committee or by the full board to improve academic quality.</p> <p>As outlined in Chapter I of this report, the general education programs at the state's public, four-year institutions allow students to graduate with significant gaps in their education. However, issues of curriculum, graduation requirements, and academic standards were not discussed in any board minutes during the period studied, nor are they addressed in the UMS strategic plan. Therefore, a Failing grade.</p>
<p>Actions to assess student learning</p> <p><b>Grade: F</b></p>	<p>Section 4-B of the board's charter specifies that the board shall "develop and maintain a strong system of accountability to the public for performance results of the system." Nonetheless, neither the board or system website seems to contain any information about the system's learning outcomes. Over the 27 months of board activity studied, there is no record of any board discussion or action concerning assessment of academic effectiveness or quality. <i>New Challenges, New Directions</i> also does not include any proposals to measure or assess learning.</p> <p>Commendably, the system campuses at Fort Kent and Presque Isle use the Education Testing Service Proficiency Profile to assess the progress of their students in gaining core collegiate skills, and they report the results on their College Portrait sites. Other campuses have similar assessments under consideration. However, there is no evidence of board oversight or involvement in these efforts. Thus, a Failing grade.</p>

**Governance  
Element**

**Evaluation**

Actions to control costs and increase efficiency

**Grade: F**

For the fiscal year 2011, all seven universities submitted balanced budget proposals; however, several campuses (Fort Kent, Presque Isle, and Machias) were only able to do so because of federal stimulus funding, which will soon run out. State appropriations have dropped in recent years and may drop further still. Thus, the UMS has a pressing need to control costs and increase efficiency. During the period studied, the UMS took a number of steps to do just that, with the bulk of the costs coming out of system-wide services and personnel reductions. Other savings have come from administrative efficiencies, such as eliminating low-enrollment courses. Additionally, several universities have submitted reorganization plans that have resulted in savings; the University of Southern Maine, for example, has consolidated eight colleges into five, resulting in a projected savings of \$1 million annually.

At the same time, during the period reviewed, the board unanimously approved every construction project, real estate transaction, and purchasing contract put before it. That included over \$50 million towards purchasing, expanding, or renovating facilities; and there is no record of any facilities being closed or sold. Additionally, minutes indicate the UMS created 14 new degree programs and eliminated only four. Expansions have gone forward in spite of the fact that the UMS' own reports indicate that system-wide enrollment is likely to decrease in coming years.

Despite widespread concerns about rising tuition and declining state appropriations, the board did not heed the advice of the administrative staff to cap tuition. At the September 2009 Finance/Facilities Committee meeting, Vice Chancellor Wyke reported to the committee that the chief financial officers of the seven universities were concerned that, "the UMS is in danger of pricing the tuition out of reach for Maine people."



**Governance  
Element**
**Evaluation**

He recommended keeping tuition increases close to inflation and exploring models for zero percent tuition increases. The board, however, approved a tuition increase of 4.8 percent in 2010, and the Multi-Year Financial Plan released by the board in November 2010 projects annual tuition increases of 4 percent or more.

The Multi-Year Financial Plan foresees raising tuition if state appropriations do not increase. But as one state senator observed when the UMS made its last request for an increase in appropriation, “It’s nice to know what they feel the state should do if we had the money. But the reality says they should probably have a backup plan, too.”

Although the campuses have made strong efforts to reduce costs, given Maine’s budget and demographic realities, these efforts are not enough. The Board of Trustees must be more active in the process of cost control and limit tuition increases. Thus, a Failing grade.

Avoiding the  
rubber stamp

**Grade: F**

Complete meeting minutes were available for 13 full board meetings during the period reviewed. At these meetings, the board voted on 152 motions; all were approved unanimously. Additionally, no dissenting votes are recorded in any committee meetings during that time. Looking back prior to the period studied for this report, no dissenting votes were cast in Board of Trustees meetings in 2005–2008. Board of Trustees staff indicate that if the board has concerns about an item, they will request additional data and discussion or a campus to rework the proposal to address the areas of concern before putting it back on the agenda later. However, the board minutes do not indicate any instances in which trustees ordered a proposal from the system or from a university to be sent back for further study.

**Governance  
Element**

**Evaluation**

Additionally, in most cases spending proposals were made in committee meetings and then passed by the full board within 24 hours. The rapid progress of proposals from committee to enactment suggests that due diligence may not always occur.

While there is no doubt value in consensus, the fact that board minutes do not record a single dissenting vote over a period of several years strongly suggests that board members are failing to engage seriously in their oversight responsibility. Accordingly, the board receives a Failing grade.

**SYSTEM GRADE: F**

## CHAPTER IV:

System Grade	<b>COST AND EFFECTIVENESS</b>
<b>F</b>	Undergraduate tuition and fees in Maine have grown rapidly in recent years, with an increased percentage of spending going to administration. Meanwhile, graduation rates remain very low.

**FOR GENERATIONS, PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION** has opened the door of opportunity to working families by offering an affordable alternative to private colleges and universities. Increasingly, however, that door is closing. Over the last thirty years, inflation-adjusted tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and universities nationwide have increased 259 percent. In just the last decade (2001–2011), inflation-adjusted tuition and fees at public four-year institutions have gone up on average 5.6 percent every year.<sup>24</sup> This hits all families hard, but especially middle-class families, whose children are likely to receive only a partial offset to rising tuition and fees through financial aid. In 2009, the median income for an American household was \$49,777<sup>25</sup>; the average full price for putting an in-state student through a single year of a public four-year institution (tuition, fees, books, room, and board) stands at \$20,339<sup>26</sup>—which is 41 percent of the family budget.

The solution for most students and their families: ever-increasing debt loads. The Institute for College Access & Success reports that in 2009, 77 percent of University of Maine at Orono graduates borrowed money to pay for school—and those who did left college with an average debt of \$30,824.<sup>27</sup> The statewide student debt average of \$29,143 was third-largest in the nation.<sup>28</sup> As the Lumina Foundation for Education sums up, “lower- and middle-class families are having a harder time paying for college. More poor students are staying away, and large

24 College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2010*, 13.

25 U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey,” accessed 22 March, 2010 <[http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032010/hhinc/new01\\_000.htm](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032010/hhinc/new01_000.htm)>.

26 *Trends in College Pricing 2010*, 6.

27 Institute for College Access & Success, The Project on Student Debt, accessed 22 March 2011 <[http://projectonstudentdebt.org/state\\_by\\_state-view2010.php?area=ME](http://projectonstudentdebt.org/state_by_state-view2010.php?area=ME)>.

28 Institute for College Access & Success, The Project on Student Debt, *Student Debt and the Class of 2009*, 3 <<http://projectonstudentdebt.org/files/pub/classof2009.pdf>>.

percentages of students face heavy debt as they enter the workforce.”<sup>29</sup>

With the price of college rising so sharply, many question the cost effectiveness and cost management of higher education. Four out of ten Americans surveyed in 2007 gave the blunt answer that they considered waste and mismanagement major factors in driving up higher education costs.<sup>30</sup> Given these numbers, it is imperative that higher education regain the confidence of the public in its use of funds.

This section examines the universities governed by the University of Maine System Board of Trustees. In it, we ask how much students are paying for college, what that money is being spent on, and what students are getting in return. We look at trends in tuition and fees and how those trends compare to median household income, and we look at trends in university spending. We examine whether the universities are successful in retaining full-time freshmen after their first year of study and whether those students go on to graduate in a timely fashion. In addition, this section evaluates the handling of unproductive programs and whether institutions use performance as a criterion in funding allocations.

The period of evaluation is generally five years. However, periods of measure vary slightly based on data availability and the specific measure. The most recent year for which data is available is consistently between 2008 and 2010. Grading is on a Pass/Fail basis. The following section describes the various elements used to evaluate the universities and explains the grading criteria.

**Trends in in-state undergraduate tuition and fees.** This measure assesses the commitment of the universities to keeping tuition and fee increases at reasonable levels. If during the period reviewed, tuition and fees increased at a rate equal to or less than the rate of inflation (using the Consumer Price Index), the institutions received a Passing grade. If, however, tuition and fees increased more rapidly than the rate of inflation, the institutions received a Failing grade.

**Undergraduate tuition and fees as a percentage of median household income.** This measure indicates whether the universities have kept higher education affordable relative to median household income. If the percentage of median household income required to pay for tuition and fees decreased or remained relatively unchanged from the base year, the universities received a Passing grade. Conversely, if tuition and fees required a greater percentage of a family’s income, the universities received a Failing grade.

<sup>29</sup> Lumina Foundation for Education, *Hitting Home: Quality, Cost, and Access Challenges Confronting Higher Education Today* (2007), 2.

<sup>30</sup> John Immerwahr and Jean Johnson, *Squeeze Play: How Parents and the Public Look at Higher Education Today*, a report prepared by Public Agenda for The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (Washington, DC: 2007), 23.

**First-year retention rates for first-time, full-time freshmen.** This measure examines the percentage of first-time, full-time students enrolled as freshmen who continue the following year as sophomores. In effect, this is the first-year drop-out rate. It is an important measure for two reasons. First, remaining after the first year is an indicator that the student is more likely to complete his or her degree. Second, it can also suggest—especially to an institution that has a large drop-out rate after the first year—that the students were not sufficiently prepared (either academically or socially) to succeed. Both are important indicators for board members to examine. If the first- to second-year retention rates were less than 64 percent, then the universities received a Failing grade.

**Baccalaureate graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshmen.** This measure examines the current four- and six-year graduation rates for each institution. While ideally 100 percent of first-time, full-time freshmen should graduate in four years and certainly by six years, we have applied a 64 percent benchmark—a typical grading scale used to assess students' Pass/Fail rate. If less than 64 percent of students graduated within six years, the institution received a Failing grade. The national six-year baccalaureate graduation rate of 57.6 percent is unacceptable and is not used as a standard for grading purposes.

**Instructional vs. administrative spending.** This measure assesses the commitment of the institutions to instructional spending versus administrative spending. It examines the percentage change in instructional and administrative spending relative to the base year. It also examines instructional and administrative expenditures as a percentage of Educational & General Expenditures (E&G) during the period surveyed. If the percentage increase in instructional spending was equal to or higher than the percentage increase in administrative spending—signifying that instruction was a priority—the universities received a Passing grade. If the opposite were true, the institutions received a Failing grade.

**Ratio of new programs to closed programs.** This is an efficiency and cost measure that attempts to assess how well the universities are monitoring program growth through approval of new and closure of old programs. If a university established twice as many or more programs than it closed, it received a Failing grade.

**Performance as a criterion for funding.** Rewards and incentives for good outcomes can lead to better results. This measure ascertains whether or not the universities use, either in part or fully, performance as a criterion for funding. If performance is used as a criterion, the institutions received a Passing grade. If not, they received a Failing grade.

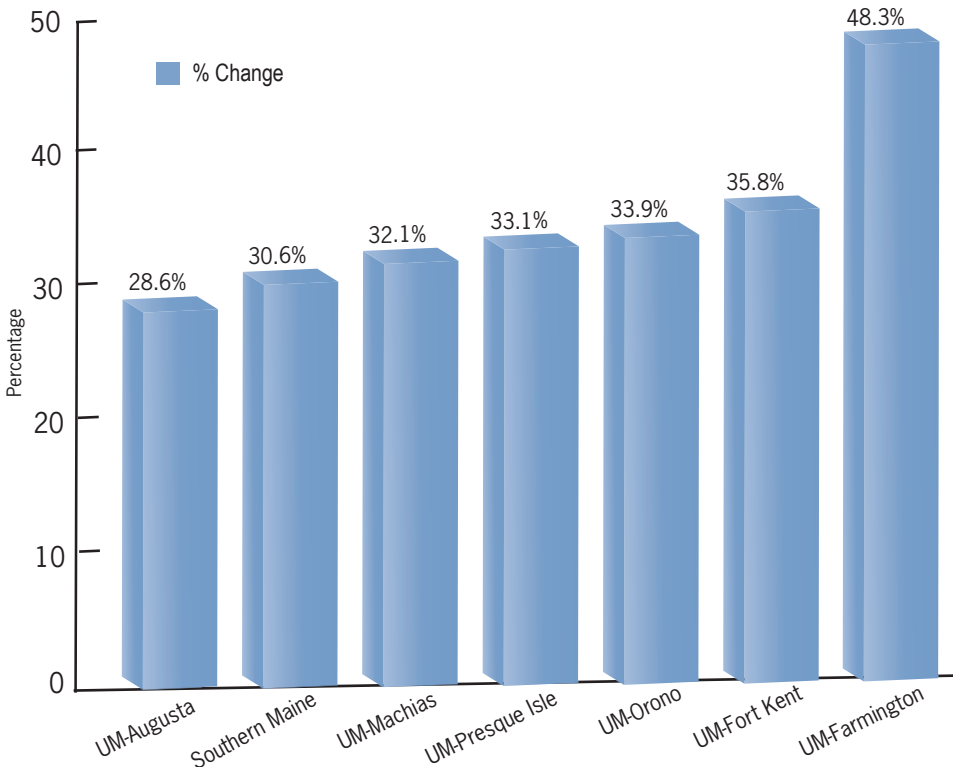
Cost/Effectiveness Element	Evaluation
Trends in in-state under-graduate tuition and fees  <b>Grade: F</b>	Inflation-adjusted, in-state tuition and required fees increased dramatically across the University of Maine System during the period reviewed. From 2004 to 2009, in-state tuition and fees at UMS institutions increased by an average of 35 percent. The Farmington campus had the steepest increases, raising tuition almost 50 percent in just five years. UMS tuition and fees are now well above the national average for four-year public institutions and continuing to rise rapidly. Thus, we assign Failing grades to each institution and to the system as a whole.

**Cost/Effectiveness****Element****Evaluation****TRENDS IN UNDERGRADUATE TUITION & FEES**

INSTITUTION	2004-05	2009-10	% Change	GRADE
University of Maine-Augusta	\$5,332	\$6,855	28.6%	F
University of Maine-Farmington	5,849	8,676	48.3	F
University of Maine-Fort Kent	5,009	6,803	35.8	F
University of Maine-Machias	5,128	6,775	32.1	F
University of Maine-Orono	7,187	9,626	33.9	F
University of Maine-Presque Isle	5,065	6,744	33.1	F
University of Southern Maine	6,258	8,174	30.6	F

**SYSTEM GRADE: F**

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Note: 2004-05 dollar amounts are expressed in 2009 inflation-adjusted numbers.



Cost/Effectiveness Element	Evaluation
Undergraduate tuition and fees as a percentage of median household income  <b>Grade: F</b>	<p>In 2004, Maine families could expect to pay an average of 12.1 percent of their household income for annual in-state tuition and fees (not including room, board, books or other costs). In 2009, an average of 16.1 percent of median household income was required, an increase of a full one-third, even after adjusting for inflation. Again, no institutions deviated significantly from the overall trend.</p> <p>Such rapid tuition increases make it difficult for students and their families to plan for college expenses. Indeed, at this rate of increase, families with children now beginning middle school will be expected to pay nearly one-quarter of their income to send just one child to an institution in the Maine system. Accordingly, we assign a Failing grade to each university and to the system as a whole.</p>

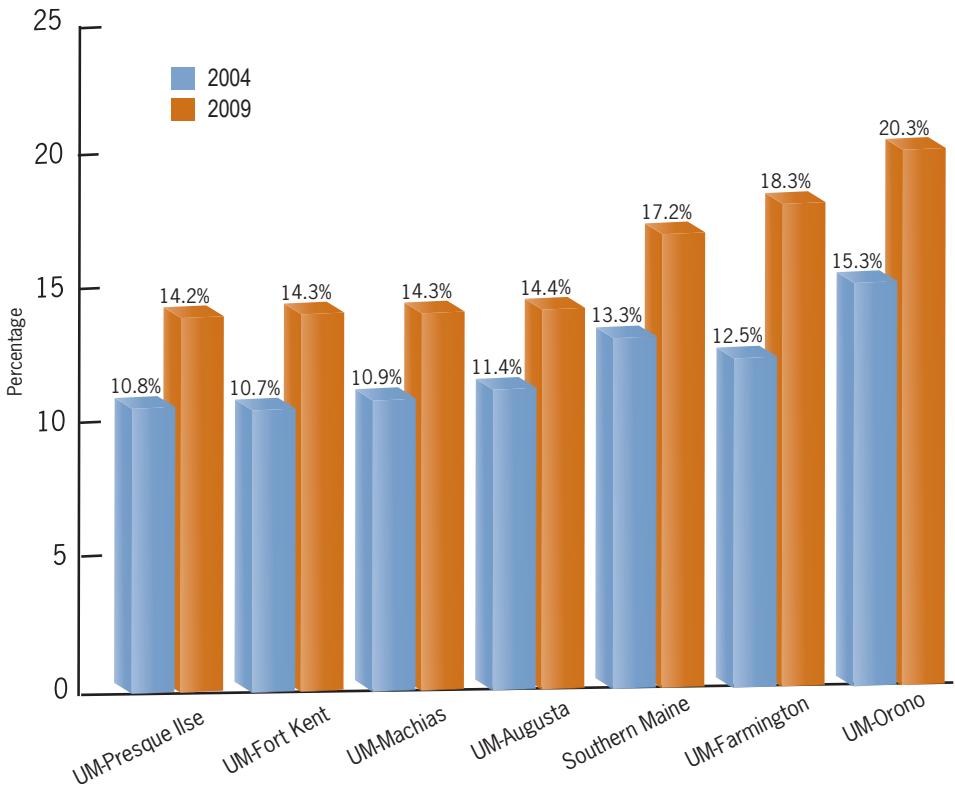


**Cost/Effectiveness****Element****Evaluation****UNDERGRADUATE TUITION & FEES AS A PERCENTAGE OF  
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

INSTITUTION	2004-05	2009-10	Change in % Points	% Change	GRADE
University of Maine-Augusta	11.4%	14.4%	3.1%	27.0%	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Farmington	12.5	18.3	5.8	46.6	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Fort Kent	10.7	14.3	3.7	34.2	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Machias	10.9	14.3	3.3	30.6	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Orono	15.3	20.3	5.0	32.3	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Presque Isle	10.8	14.2	3.4	31.6	<b>F</b>
University of Southern Maine	13.3	17.2	3.9	29.1	<b>F</b>

**SYSTEM GRADE: F**

Source: IPEDS and U.S. Census Bureau; Note: 2004 dollar amounts for tuition & fees and median income were based on 2009 inflation-adjusted numbers.



**Cost/Effectiveness**

**Element**

**Evaluation**

First-year retention rates for first-time, full-time freshmen

**Grade: P**

Generally speaking, UMS institutions have done a satisfactory job of retaining their freshmen, with the statewide retention rate holding steady at about 68 percent, and the highest figure being posted by the flagship campus at 79 percent. Thus, the system as a whole receives a Passing grade.

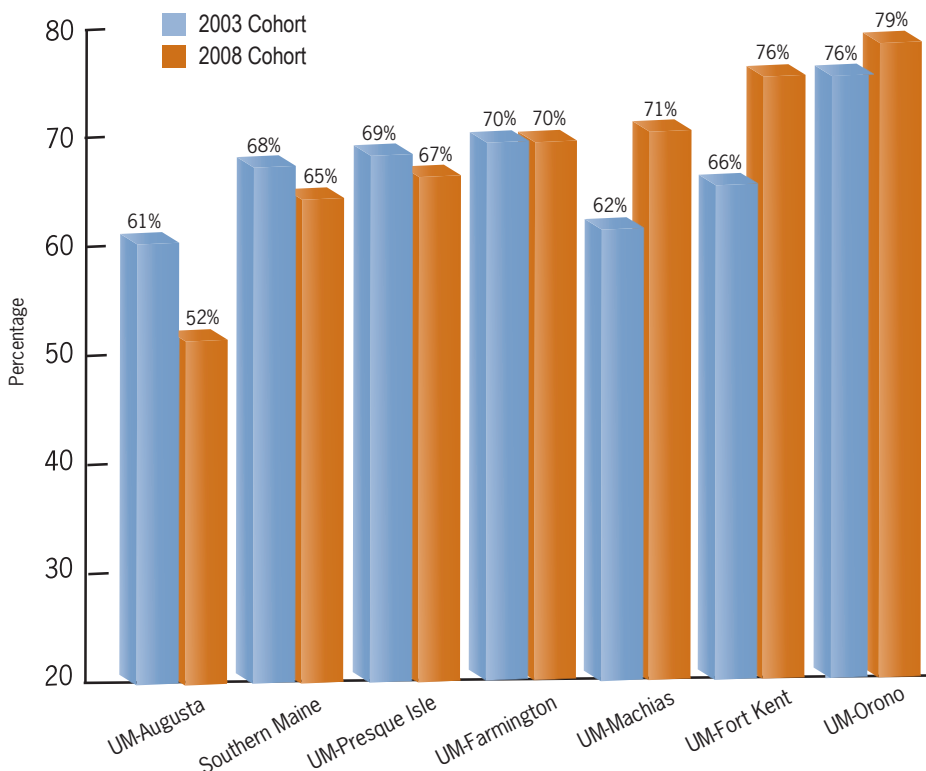
Three campuses have shown significant positive changes in their retention rates over the five-year period studied. The flagship campus raised its retention rate 3 percent to its current 79 percent level. The University of Maine at Machias has improved markedly; after retaining only 62 percent of their freshmen in 2003, they kept that figure above 70 percent for each of the last four entering classes for which data is available. The Fort Kent campus posted a remarkable 76 percent retention for the 2008 entering class, but this figure must be viewed with caution, as it was a dramatic single-year improvement and it remains to be seen whether that trend will continue. The announcement of a new dual enrollment program at UMFK is another encouraging sign of commitment to better retention.

**Cost/Effectiveness****Element****Evaluation****FIRST-YEAR RETENTION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN**

INSTITUTION	2003 Cohort	2008 Cohort	Change in % Points	GRADE
University of Maine-Augusta	61%	52%	-9%	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Farmington	70	70	0	<b>P</b>
University of Maine-Fort Kent	66	76	10	<b>P</b>
University of Maine-Machias	62	71	9	<b>P</b>
University of Maine-Orono	76	79	3	<b>P</b>
University of Maine-Presque Isle	69	67	-2	<b>P</b>
University of Southern Maine	68	65	-3	<b>P</b>

**SYSTEM GRADE: P**

Source: IPEDS; Note: Original data were reported without decimal places.



**Cost/Effectiveness**

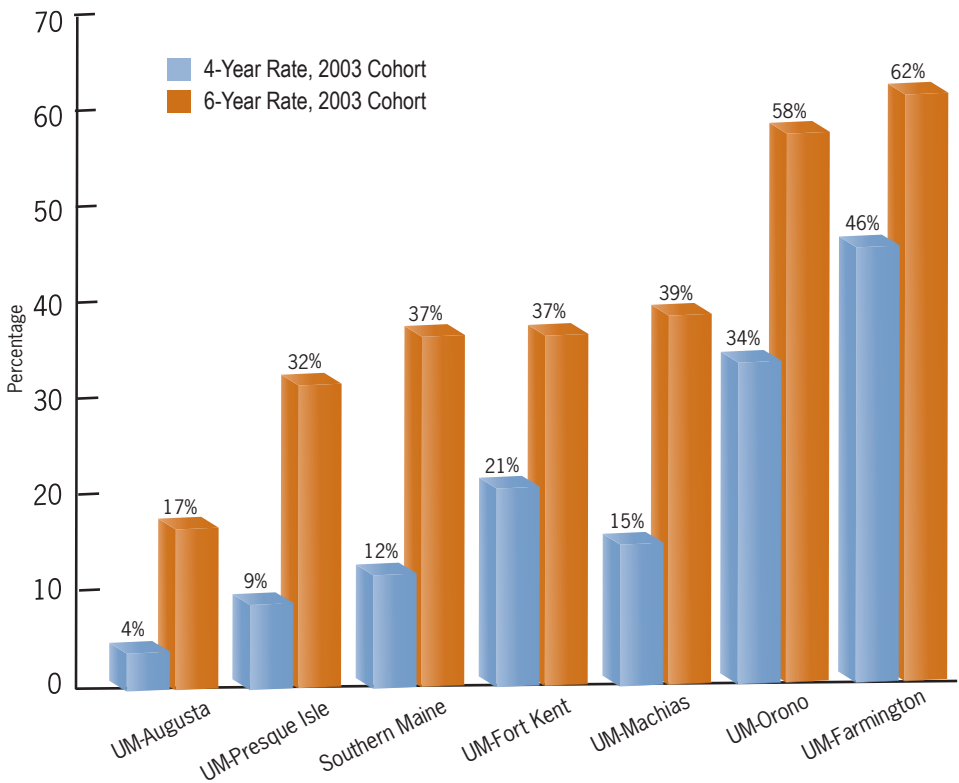
Element	Evaluation
Baccalaureate graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshmen	Graduation rate is among the most important measures for any educational institution; unfortunately, it is also a measure by which the UMS schools do poorly. System-wide, only about one in five students admitted to a four-year program at a UMS institution will graduate on time. Even if given six years, the system only manages to graduate about 40 percent of its first-time, full-time students.
<b>Grade: F</b>	<p>The Orono and Farmington campuses have slightly higher graduation rates, as would be expected from, respectively, a state flagship and a liberal-arts college. The graduation figures are lowest at the regional campuses. Overall, less than a third of UMS students are graduating on time, and barely over half finish within six years. Transfer rates from the regional campuses are high, and it is possible that a significant number of students will complete their degrees at another institution, but the graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshmen are disquietingly low.</p> <p>In recent years, there has been a slight upward trend, but some campuses continue to have very weak graduation rates. The Augusta campus, for example, reported that first-time, full-time students who enrolled in baccalaureate programs in the year 2003 had a four-year graduation rate of 4 percent, and the four-year graduation rate for students who enrolled in 2003 at the campus at Presque Isle was 9 percent.</p> <p>Thus, a Failing grade for each institution and the system as a whole.</p>

**Cost/Effectiveness****Element****Evaluation****BACCALAUREATE GRADUATION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN**

INSTITUTION	1998 COHORT GRADUATION RATE		2003 COHORT GRADUATION RATE		CHANGE IN % POINTS		GRADE
	4-Year	6-Year	4-Year	6-Year	4-Year	6-Year	
University of Maine-Augusta	2%	10%	4%	17%	2%	7%	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Farmington	32	58	46	62	14	4	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Fort Kent	14	37	21	37	7	0	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Machias	14	45	15	39	1	-6	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Orono	31	56	34	58	3	2	<b>F</b>
University of Maine-Presque Isle	7	29	9	32	2	3	<b>F</b>
University of Southern Maine	9	30	12	37	3	7	<b>F</b>

**SYSTEM GRADE: F**

Source: IPEDS; Note: Original data were reported without decimal places.



**Cost/Effectiveness**  
**Element**

**Evaluation**

Instructional vs.  
administrative spending

**Grade: P**

When UMS is viewed as a whole, there was scant change in instructional vs. administrative spending patterns over the six-year period studied. In 2003, spending on instruction at the seven UMS institutions surveyed ranged between 39 percent and 59 percent of each institution's Educational and General (E&G) expenditures, with an average of 50 percent; in 2008, the figures were essentially unchanged. System-wide spending on administration in 2003 ranged from 7 percent to 15 percent of E&G, with an average of just over 10 percent, and again those figures changed little during the period studied.

However, a closer look at how individual institutions were choosing to spend money reveals a very different story. Four UMS institutions—Farmington, Fort Kent, Presque Isle, and Southern Maine—have increased spending on academics faster than on administration, and thus receive Passing grades. At Presque Isle, instructional spending grew three times faster than administrative spending, and administrative spending calculated as a percentage of E&G dropped by over 19 percent. Southern Maine did even better: between 2003 and 2008, it increased spending on instruction by almost \$12 million, while holding the growth in administrative spending to less than \$200,000. On the other hand, at the Augusta, Machias, and Orono campuses, administrative spending has seen the most growth, earning them Failing marks. At Orono, the difference is dramatic: in the period 2003–2009, spending on administration grew almost three times faster than spending on instruction. Looked at as a percentage of E&G expenditures, over that same period, administrative spending jumped over 18 percent while instructional spending dropped.

The majority of UMS institutions have prioritized instruction over administration in recent spending decisions. Overall, this earns the state a Passing grade, but it is important for the state to continue to be vigilant about this important financial indicator.

**Cost/Effectiveness****Element****Evaluation****INSTRUCTIONAL VS. ADMINISTRATIVE SPENDING**

INSTITUTION		2002-03 FY	2007-08 FY	\$ Change	% Change	GRADE
University of Maine-Augusta	<i>Instruction</i>	\$14,157,000	\$20,898,000	\$6,741,000	47.6%	F
	<i>Administration</i>	2,568,000	4,143,000	1,575,000	61.3	
University of Maine-Farmington	<i>Instruction</i>	14,639,000	19,552,000	4,913,000	33.6	P
	<i>Administration</i>	2,129,000	2,815,000	686,000	32.2	
University of Maine-Fort Kent	<i>Instruction</i>	4,315,000	5,771,000	1,456,000	33.7	P
	<i>Administration</i>	1,284,000	1,638,000	354,000	27.6	
University of Maine-Machias	<i>Instruction</i>	4,023,000	4,979,000	956,000	23.8	F
	<i>Administration</i>	989,000	1,385,000	396,000	40.0	
University of Maine-Orono	<i>Instruction</i>	88,670,000	100,399,000	11,729,000	13.2	F
	<i>Administration</i>	15,496,000	21,520,000	6,024,000	38.9	
University of Maine-Presque Isle	<i>Instruction</i>	6,382,000	8,093,000	1,711,000	26.8	P
	<i>Administration</i>	1,638,000	1,785,000	147,000	9.0	
University of Southern Maine	<i>Instruction</i>	66,466,000	78,426,000	11,960,000	18.0	P
	<i>Administration</i>	11,164,000	11,346,000	182,000	1.6	

INSTITUTION		2002-03 FY as % of E&G	2007-08 FY as % of E&G	Change in % Points	% Change	GRADE
University of Maine-Augusta	<i>Instruction</i>	55.5%	57.0%	1.5%	2.7%	F
	<i>Administration</i>	10.1	11.3	1.2	12.2	
University of Maine-Farmington	<i>Instruction</i>	58.6	59.0	0.4	0.7	P
	<i>Administration</i>	8.5	8.5	0.0	-0.3	
University of Maine-Fort Kent	<i>Instruction</i>	50.8	49.2	-1.6	-3.2	P
	<i>Administration</i>	15.1	14.0	-1.2	-7.7	
University of Maine-Machias	<i>Instruction</i>	49.9	49.7	-0.2	-0.4	F
	<i>Administration</i>	12.3	13.8	1.6	12.7	
University of Maine-Orono	<i>Instruction</i>	38.9	37.7	-1.2	-3.2	F
	<i>Administration</i>	6.8	8.1	1.3	18.7	
University of Maine-Presque Isle	<i>Instruction</i>	51.8	48.7	-3.1	-5.9	P
	<i>Administration</i>	13.3	10.8	-2.5	-19.2	
University of Southern Maine	<i>Instruction</i>	48.3	50.1	1.8	3.7	P
	<i>Administration</i>	8.1	7.2	-0.9	-10.7	

**SYSTEM GRADE: P**

Source: IPEDS

**Cost/Effectiveness**  
**Element**

**Evaluation**

Ratio of new programs  
to closed programs

**Grade: F**

During the period studied, system-wide enrollment dropped slightly. Nevertheless, minutes indicate the UMS board approved the creation of 14 new graduate and undergraduate degree programs, as well as the Forest Bioproducts Research Institute and the Aquaculture Research Institute at the University of Maine. During the same period, minutes indicate the board authorized the closing of only four undergraduate majors. This 14-4 ratio is unsustainable and merits a Failing grade.

The UMS strategic plan, *New Challenges, New Directions*, sensibly identifies as one of its goals the growth or elimination of academic programs with five or fewer graduates. Finding programs to review shouldn't be hard: according to the federal Department of Education, in the 2009-2010 school year, 209 UMS programs graduated five or fewer students; 114 of those were located at the Orono campus alone. System-wide, there were 61 programs that produced no graduates at all.

The UMS could achieve substantial savings merely by combining programs that already exist on multiple campuses. The UMS offers Women's Studies majors on three different campuses, but last year only produced 15 total graduates; it offers Environmental Studies/ Environmental Planning majors on four campuses, but produced only 11 total graduates; it has 13 different music programs, spread across four different institutions, that in 2009-10 graduated a total of 40 students. Consolidating programs would allow institutions to develop distinct specializations and identities, create more robust learning communities for students, and control costs.



**Cost/Effectiveness  
Element**

**Evaluation**

Performance as a  
criterion for funding

**Grade: I**

In the course of approving funding for numerous programs and initiatives during the period studied, there are no indications that the UMS board applied any performance measures. The UMS strategic plan offers numerous metrics by which to measure the performance of the system, but it does not include any rewards to institutions or administrators for achieving targets nor penalties for failing to do so.

It is a hopeful indicator that the contract of the new UM-Orono president includes provision for a performance-based bonus. Unfortunately, the board’s press releases do not specify what metrics will be used to assess the performance. Even if the new president’s performance is subpar, his base salary of \$250,000 will represent an 18 percent increase over his predecessor’s 2008 salary of \$210,405 (the most recent figure available).

Still, creating a performance-based bonus as part of the president’s salary package is a good beginning, and one that should be expanded to all senior executives. And while the board’s efforts to introduce performance measures in the strategic plan are promising, there is still much work to be done to implement them. Thus, the system receives an Incomplete.

**SYSTEM GRADE: F**

# Appendices

**APPENDIX A** SELECTION CRITERIA FOR  
CORE COURSES

**APPENDIX B** STUDENT SURVEY  
METHODOLOGY

## Appendix A

### SELECTION CRITERIA FOR CORE COURSES

Distribution requirements on most campuses today permit students to pick from a wide range of courses that often are narrow or even outside the stated field altogether. Accordingly, to determine whether institutions in fact have a solid core curriculum, ACTA defines success in each of the seven subject areas as follows:

#### **Composition**

A college writing class focusing on grammar, style, clarity, and argument. These courses should be taught by instructors trained to evaluate and teach writing. “Across-the-curriculum” and “writing intensive” courses taught in disciplines other than English do not count if they constitute the only component of the writing requirement. Credit is not given for remedial classes or if students may test out of the requirement via SAT or ACT scores or departmental tests.

#### **Literature**

A literature survey course. Narrow, single-author, or esoteric courses do not count for this requirement, but introductions to broad subfields (such as British or Latin American literature) do.

#### **Foreign Language**

Competency at the intermediate level, defined as at least three semesters of college-level study in any foreign language, three years of high school work, or an appropriate examination score.

#### **U.S. Government or History**

A course in either U.S. history or government with enough breadth to give a broad sweep of American history and institutions. Narrow, niche courses do not count for the requirement, nor do courses that only focus on a particular state or region.

#### **Economics**

A course covering basic economic principles, preferably an introductory micro- or macroeconomics course taught by faculty from the economics or business departments.

#### **Mathematics**

A college-level course in mathematics. Specific topics may vary, but must involve study beyond the level of intermediate algebra. Logic classes may count if they are focused on abstract logic. Computer science courses count if they involve programming or advanced study. Credit is not given for remedial classes or if students may test out of the requirement via SAT or ACT scores.

#### **Natural or Physical Science**

A course in biology, geology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, or environmental science, preferably with a laboratory component. Overly narrow courses and courses with weak scientific content are not counted.

## Appendix B

### STUDENT SURVEY METHODOLOGY



**Maine Public Schools  
Campus Climate Survey Report  
January 2011**

*A project sponsored by:*  
**American Council of Trustees and Alumni**  
**[www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org)**

*Research conducted by:*  
The Pert Group

The Pert Group was contracted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) to conduct campus climate surveys with students at the University of Maine. The foremost objective was to use a professionally-designed survey instrument that was similar to several previous studies conducted to gather quality information that would inform higher education policy.

Findings are based on a sample of undergraduate students (freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) amassed through in-person data collection of 318 completed surveys conducted during the week of January 24, 2011, at the Orono campus of the University of Maine.

#### Methodology

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##### Questionnaire Design

The survey instrument was based on the instrument used in the 2004 ACTA survey of students at the top fifty colleges and universities in the United States, as well as instruments used in Missouri and Georgia in 2007, in Minnesota and Illinois in 2009, and in Idaho in 2010. The instrument includes a series of questions on student perception of political and social issues on campus as well as demographic questions that were used to ensure the sample accurately represented the student population. The survey instrument was pre-tested to ensure the questions were properly constructed and understood by respondents.

##### Data Collection

The Pert Group researchers have previously determined that in-person interviewing is the most effective method of interviewing large numbers of college students at a single institution. This method has the lowest level of coverage error and previous experiments revealed it to be an efficient and representative methodology.

Students were intercepted at various times of day and at several places of high student traffic on or adjacent to the campus to ensure randomness. Times of day ranged from 9am until 9pm. A few examples of both indoor and outdoor places of high student traffic that could be utilized, depending on the school, included eateries, coffee houses, exercise facilities, student centers, and major walkways. The process took place for multiple days per campus until sufficient completed interviews were achieved. Respondents are guaranteed anonymity, as names and contact information are not recorded with the dataset.

### Respondent Selection

Second stage sampling and respondent selection was accomplished through the following steps. After the selection of the individual schools, operations staff collected demographics, population statistics, and geographic maps for each school. Dormitory and other residential student data, as well as classroom buildings and other data germane to establishing traffic flow estimates were assembled. A list of preliminary sites was selected based on these estimates. Survey supervisors verified site suitability upon reaching each campus. They established flow at selected locations and verified that key traffic flow areas were not inadvertently omitted. Following the verification, a final selection of sites was determined and specific times and locations for a given target number of completes for each intercept location was selected based on the flow data gathered. Different times were used at each location, based on traffic flow counts. Sampling ratios at individual sites varied by traffic volume and school size to accommodate target completes. A ratio was established for respondent selection and every *n*th person was verbally asked the screening question of "Are you a student at (college)?" and a verbal follow up of "Are you a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior?" The questionnaire repeated the undergraduate screening question. Refusals were replaced with the next available person. Data collection continued over multiple days until the total number of completes were collected. Demographic questions were used to monitor potential bias on contact rates and did not reveal any issues.

### Verification Methods

A systematic, multi-level verification process was used to ensure error rates were well within acceptable norms and provide assurance of high quality data. The numerous, rigorous quality control measures include, but are not limited to:

- 1) **Manager Field Training**  
Data collection managers on this survey have all received extensive training and conducted multiple campus surveys. They have participated in extensive training that included mock interviewing, human subject treatment and other training.
- 2) **Manager Verification**  
Every survey received by a manager is hand-checked so that questionnaires with potential problems, such as incompletes, incorrect class status, or erroneous data entries, are not included in final submissions.
- 3) **Data Cleaning Procedures**  
The dataset is further scrutinized for irregularities using statistical diagnostics. Further observations are removed from the dataset if incompletes, incorrect class, statistical irregularities, or other such items are present.

### Weighting

Data was weighted by gender, race and class. Enrollment data was gathered from the school website as well as from the National Center For Education Statistics' (NCES) restricted Peer Analysis System (IPEDS).

Weighting factors for the University of Maine at Orono = .54 to 2.5

### Sampling Error

Sampling error for 318 completed surveys is +/-5.4%







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